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The Dixired, Dixigem, and Southland Peaches

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INTRODUCTION

Three new peach varieties—Dixired, Dixigem, and Southland—are described in this circular. Originating from pollinations made in 1936 on orchard trees at the United States Horticultural Station, Beltsville, Md., the seedlings from which these varieties were selected were grown at the United States Horticultural Field Laboratory, Fort Valley, Ga. They produced their first fruit in 1939 and bore fruit for observation and testing each subsequent year.

In the important peach-producing district around Fort Valley very early ripening varieties occupy an important position. Early clingstone peaches can be grown there and marketed successfully because they do not have the competition of later ripening freestone varieties from other sections of the country. Because of the effects of warm winters on delayed foliation of peach trees, the Fort Valley district marks the southern limit at which most important commercial varieties can be grown; therefore, the earliest peaches now on the market usually are from that district. Mayflower, Uneeda, and Early Rose—all white-fleshed clingstones—have been the principal early peaches grown. They have poor flavor when picked shipping-ripe, lack shipping quality, and are not popular with either the grower or the consumer. Dixired and Dixigem, which produce attractive, yellow-fleshed fruit of good quality, were introduced to replace Uneeda and Early Rose. In addition, for practical purposes the fruit of Dixigem is freestone. Southland, also yellow-fleshed but later ripening, was introduced as a possible replacement for the regular Hiley variety. Once a leading commercial variety, Hiley has been losing popularity rapidly because of the competition of yellow-fleshed peaches.

DIXIRED

Origin and General Description

The Dixired peach (introduced in 1945; formerly tested as FV 5–70) is a seedling of selfed Halehaven. Of the three varieties described herein, it is the earliest to ripen its fruit. The fruit of Dixired matures at the same time as that of Uneeda, or about 2 weeks earlier than that of Golden Jubilee. The Dixired fruit (fig. 1) is clingstone, medium-sized, and round. Its pubescence is very light. About three-fourths of the surface is covered with an attractive bright-red blush. The flesh is yellow, firm but melting, medium-textured, and good-flavored.

Technical Description

Tree.—Moderately vigorous, productive, upright to somewhat spreading. Leaf medium-sized; blade narrow, flat, slightly wavy; apex acute; base broadly acute; margin serrate; glands globose.

Flower.—Medium-petaled, nonshowy; pollen fertile.

Fruit.—Ripening early, 2 weeks earlier than that of Golden Jubilee; medium-sized; round, with slightly unequal halves; cavity medium deep, wide; suture shallow; apex pointed, mucronate; color yellow, splashed with bright red over most of the surface; pubescence very light, fine; skin medium thick, medium tough; flesh yellow with some red, juicy, medium-textured, firm, melting, subacid to sweet; flavor good; stone cling, ovate, pointed, 3 cm. long, 2.1 cm. wide, 1.8 cm. thick, ventral suture narrow, dorsal suture winged, grooved.

Adaptation

The Dixired peach has been grown and tested principally in Georgia, but it has been fruited in South Carolina and Maryland also. The chilling requirement to break the rest period of its buds is intermediate, considerably less than that of the Early Rose variety. On the basis of its chilling requirement the variety is not adapted to sections having winter temperatures higher than those at Fort Valley, Ga.

The fruit attains high color several days before it is mature. It is much more highly colored than that of Uneeda, the principal commercial variety in its season. There is danger of picking it too green at the shipping-ripe stage, for even at that early stage most of the surface of

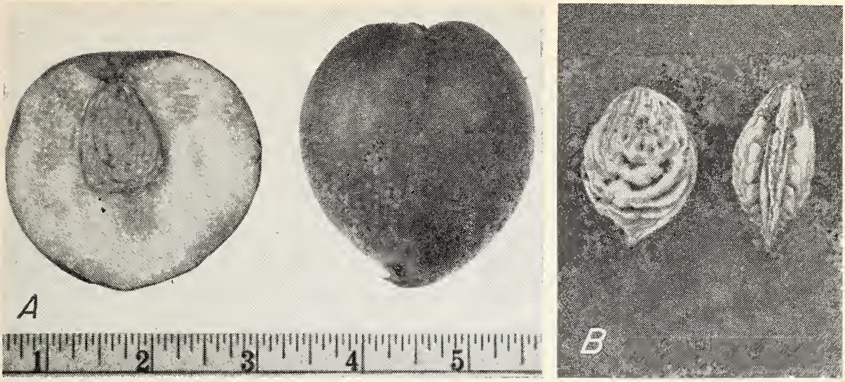

FIGURE 1.—Early, yellow-fleshed, clingstone fruit (*A*) and stone (*B*) of the Dixired peach.

the fruit is covered with an attractive bright-red blush. Color develops well on fruit even in shaded portions of the tree.

The fruit, which is unusually firm for an early variety, much firmer than that of Uneeda, has been shipped successfully in carload lots from the Fort Valley district to distant markets. The variety is therefore recommended as an early shipping peach for those sections where early clingstone peaches can be grown and marketed to advantage. It is also recommended as an early local-market variety because of its attractive appearance, firm flesh, and good quality.

DIXIGEM

ORIGIN AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Dixigem peach (introduced in 1944; formerly tested as FV 8–35) is the result of a cross between an unnamed seedling of Dewey × St.

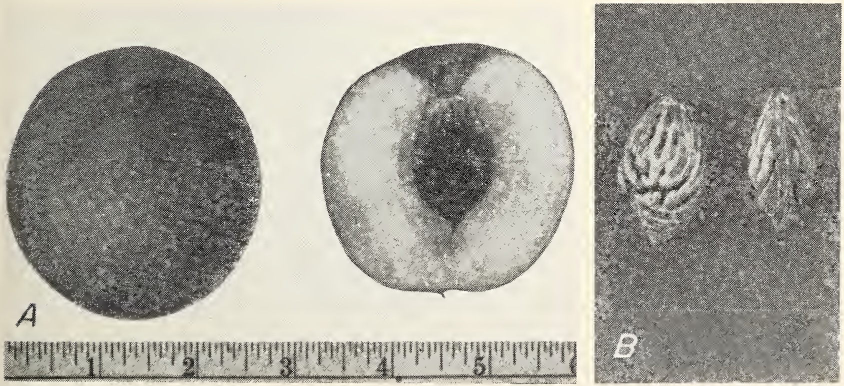

FIGURE 2.—Early, yellow-fleshed, all-purpose fruit (*A*) and stone (*B*) of the Dixigem peach.

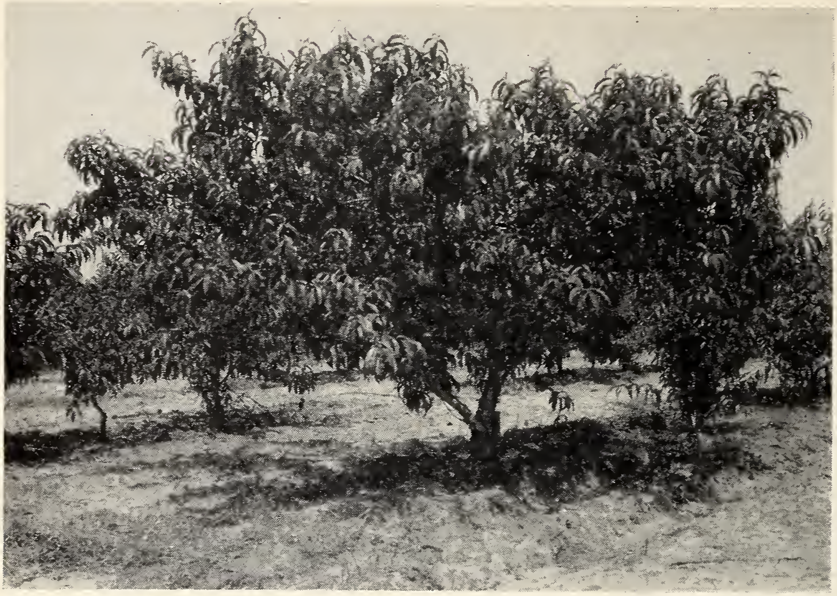

FIGURE 3.—Original Dixigem peach tree when 8 years old, in the experimental orchard, Fort Valley, Ga.

John and the South Haven variety. The Dewey × St. John seedling was selected by W. F. Wight during the early years of the peach-breeding work of the United States Department of Agriculture. The fruit of Dixigem (fig. 2) ripens about 5 days earlier than that of Golden Jubilee. The flesh adheres to the stone more than that of some of the later ripening varieties, but it separates readily from the stone before the fruit is eating-ripe. The fruit is medium-sized and ovate and has light pubescence. An attractive, light-red blush covers about half the surface and a bright-yellow ground color the rest of it. The flesh is yellow with little red in the pit cavity. It is firm but melting, fine-textured, and good-flavored.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

Tree.—Vigorous, productive, upright to slightly spreading (fig. 3). Leaf large; blade narrow in relation to length; apex broadly acute; base acute; margin crenate; glands reniform.

Flower.—Medium-petaled, nonshowy; pollen fertile.

Fruit.—Ripening early, about 5 days earlier than that of Golden Jubilee; medium-sized; ovate; cavity deep, narrow; suture shallow to medium; apex rounded; color bright yellow, splashed with light red; pubescence light to medium abundant; skin medium thick to thick; flesh yellow with very little red in pit cavity, juicy, fine-textured, firm, melting; flavor very good; stone almost free, elliptical, pointed, 3.7 cm. long, 2.1 cm. wide, 1.6 cm. thick, ventral suture narrow, deeply grooved, dorsal suture deep, winged.

ADAPTATION

The Dixigem peach has been fruited in Georgia and South Carolina. It requires a little less chilling to break the rest period of its buds than Dixired does and only slightly more than Elberta. It is adapted to sections approximately as far south as Elberta can be grown.

Dixigem is recommended as an early shipping variety and for local-market use. Part-carload shipments of Dixigem peaches made from commercial orchards near Fort Valley to distant markets resulted in favorable reports on the shipping quality and appearance of the fruit at destination.

Dixigem is also a good variety for canning and freezing. Processing tests at the Georgia and South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Stations over a period of several years have shown that Dixigem is one of the best varieties available for both canning and freezing. The flesh is nonbrowning—that is, it shows relatively little discoloration when thawed after being frozen. Few varieties possess this character, and it is one that adds greatly to the value of Dixigem for freezing. These characteristics, together with its attractive appearance, firm flesh, and good quality, make it a desirable variety for its season of ripening.

SOUTHLAND

ORIGIN AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Southland peach (introduced in 1946; formerly tested as FV 4–155) is a seedling of selfed Halehaven. It is a yellow freestone peach which ripens in season with the Hiley variety, about 16 days earlier than Elberta. The fruit (fig. 4) is medium-sized to large and

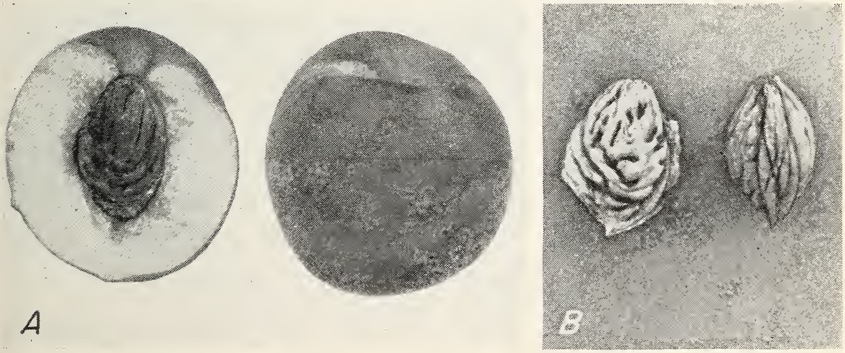

FIGURE 4.—Early-midseason, yellow-fleshed, freestone fruit (*A*) and stone (*B*) of the Southland peach.

round and has light pubescence. About half the surface is covered with a light-red blush. Unlike the blush of the parent, Halehaven, this does not become too dark red for best appearance. The ground color is attractive yellow. The flesh is firm, slow softening, medium-textured, and good-flavored.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

Tree.—Vigorous, productive, upright to slightly spreading (fig. 5). Leaf large; blade narrow in relation to length, wavy, slightly crinkled; apex acute; base acute; margin finely crenate; glands globose.

Flower.—Large-petaled, showy; pollen fertile.

Fruit.—Ripening early midseason, about 16 days earlier than that of Elberta; medium-sized to large; round; cavity medium deep, medium wide, flaring; suture shallow; apex rounded; color yellow, partially covered with an attractive red blush; pubescence light; skin thick; flesh yellow, juicy, medium-textured, firm, melting, ripening evenly except for slight tendency to ripen at base first; flavor mild, good; stone free, oval, 3.7 cm. long, 2.6 cm. wide, 2.0 cm. thick, ventral suture narrow, deep, dorsal suture winged, surface deeply pitted.

ADAPTATION

The Southland peach has been tested principally in Georgia, but it has fruited in Mississippi and Louisiana also. Its leaf and flower buds require slightly less chilling to break their rest period than do buds of Hiley, which has the lowest chilling requirement of any of the leading commercial varieties. Therefore, on the basis of its chilling

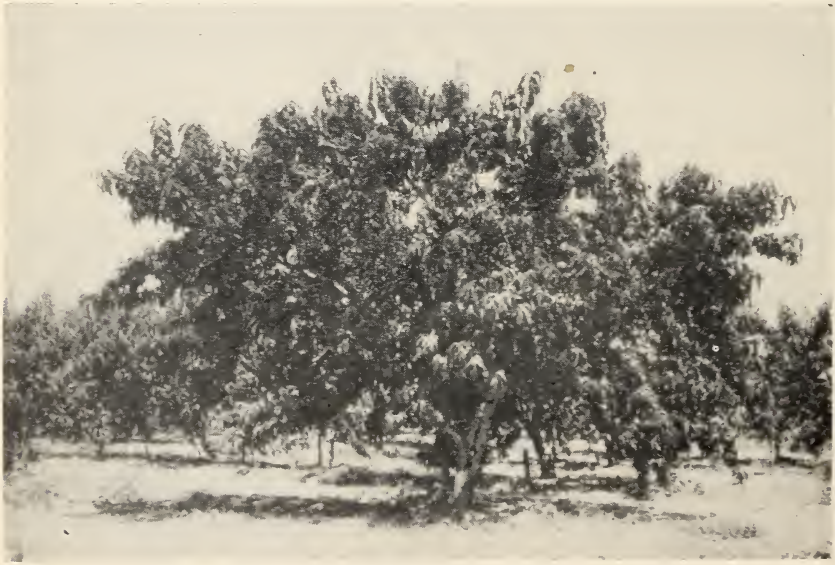

FIGURE 5.—Original Southland peach tree when 9 years old, in the experimental orchard, Fort Valley, Ga.

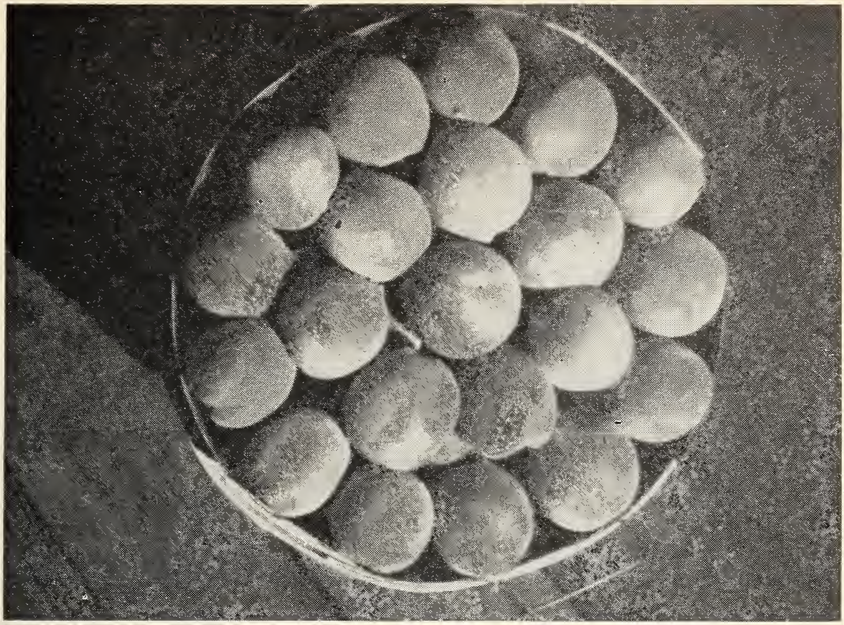

FIGURE 6.—Basket of Southland peaches packed for experimental shipment.

requirement Southland is particularly adapted to the extreme southern peach-growing belt and should succeed wherever Hiley can be grown. It has been successful in a test planting 85 miles south of Fort Valley, but, like Hiley, it probably would not do well much farther south because of delayed foliation difficulties.

Southland has not been fruited as extensively as Dixired and Dixigem, but individual baskets of Southland peaches (fig. 6) sent to distant markets by express and refrigerator car have shipped well. In holding tests Southland has been much slower in softening after harvest than most other varieties ripening earlier than Elberta, indicating that it should ship satisfactorily. It is recommended for trial as a shipping variety for the period 2 weeks earlier than Elberta.

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